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THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER

The symbol, a cross and a rose, and the name of the Rosicrucians appeared in various European countries as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (e.g., the name is mentioned in Dante's Divina Commedia) and refer to secret religious groups which were clandestine because of fear of ecclesiastic and secular persecution for heresy. No records of their rites and teachings during their early history have been found. 1/

The first literary documents are three writings printed between 1610 and 1616 in Germany. They are generally ascribed to a high Wuerttemberg Protestant clergyman, Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654), who also wrote a utopia in the style of Thomas More:

- (a) Fama Fraternitatis (Report or Praise of the Brotherhood), Cassel (Hesse), 1610.
- (b) Confessio Fraternitatis (Creed of the Brotherhood), 1615. (First to reveal the name.)
- (c) Matrimonium Chymicum Christiani Rosencreutz (The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz), Strasbourg, 1616.

The Fama give a fantastic biography of the alleged founder of the brotherhood, Christian Rosencreutz (Rose Cross) who is said to have lived 106 years, from 1378 to 1484, and to have travelled to the Holy Land, Damascus, Egypt and Morocco, where he was initiated into oriental wisdom. On his return he allegedly founded a secret fraternity with fantastic titles for its officials (Imperator, Magus, etc.), organized much on the pattern of an ecclesiastical order. The members were designated only by initials. 2/

The Chemical Wedding purports to be written by Christian Rosencreutz himself and allegedly was discovered when his

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tomb was opened in 1604, 120 years after his death.

Rosencrutz and his followers are described as dedicated to the study of nature and medicine and to practicing acts of benevolence and charity. It is generally assumed that Christian Rosencrutz is a fictitious person, his name being symbolical, and that the order, as described in these books, never did exist.

Rosicrucian lodges were founded at later dates in various places, one being formed in London in 1646. Common to many of them is the practice of mystical religion, combining a belief that true insight and perfection can be achieved by contemplation and certain exercises with secrecy, a bent for playing with hidden meanings and a degree of opposition to State and Church.

The 18th Century brought a revival of the Rosicrucian association in Germany, Italy, Russia and other countries. In 1756 the Reformed Rite of New or German Gold and Rose Crusians was founded. Persons in high positions frequently joined the lodges. The order existed in France during the Revolution. The Freemasons borrowed some of the rituals in modified form. 3/

The name of the brotherhood itself was well adapted to appeal to popular imagination. 4/ It was sometimes interpreted as representing a synthesis of Christianity and Greek humanism. Rosicrucianism was mentioned by many of the outstanding writers, such as Descartes, Leibniz, Herder, Goethe (in his poem Die Geheimnisse, The Secrets), Butler, Pope, Shelley, Walter Scott and Bulwer-Lytton.

In the nineteenth century new lodges were formed in England and spread to India, Australia, New Zealand and Latin America. 5/ Their interest in unorthodox methods of therapy, such as hypnosis, radiation, etc., reflected their belief in the spiritual character of the universe.

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The first lodge in the United States was founded in Philadelphia in 1694 by wealthy businessmen and developed into a nationwide non-sectarian organization, the Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosierucians (AMORC). Its doctrine holds out prospects for a life of health, happiness and peace to members who live in harmony with cosmic forces.

AMORC headquarters are in San Jose, California, under H. Spender Lewis, and with branches all over the world (including 250 West 57th Street, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco). Abundant propaganda literature exists, but the secret rites of the inner circle are not known to the uninitiated. 5/ The order is considered as politically indifferent and essentially a money making concern. 1/

A new use of the name of Rosierucianism was inaugurated in this century through the Anthroposophical movement of Rudolf Steiner, which had an entirely different origin. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), an Austrian, belonged originally to the Theosophical Movement, founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in 1875, later headed by Miss Annie Besant (US headquarters: Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society in America, 249 Lexington Avenue, New York. Theosophical Society Adyar, 242 East 33rd Street, New York. Theosophical Society, 726 11th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. And many others).

The Theosophical movement--which now has a center in Adyar, India, and 655 branches in various countries, including 77 in the US--is based on the common belief of the mystical movements of all religions, in the identity of the human soul and the universe and the idea that by meditation and concentration a union of soul and world can be achieved. Theosophy created a kind of synthetic religion concentrating mainly on Yoga and Hinduism, while Steiner, who after differences with Annie Besant broke away from the Theosophic Society in 1912,

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founded his Anthroposophy (knowledge of man) on his interpretation of Christianity. Like the Theosophy, he believes in transmigration of the soul and in reincarnation. He believes in intuitive cognition of "higher worlds," which reveals to him the principles on which he wishes to re-orient all spheres of life. His insight is accepted as authoritative by his adherents. He developed not only a philosophy, but also a medical science; an educational system (the Waldorf-School in Stuttgart, Germany, and the Rudolf Steiner School at 15 East 78th Street, New York, are run according to his doctrine); a new poetry; a new art of dancing called eurythmics; a new system of agriculture; a new social and political system, the Three Level System of Society (Preisgliederung der Gesellschaft) of mind, economics, law; and a Christian sect, New Christian Community. There is a center for Anthroposophic studies in Dornach, near Basle, Switzerland, with branches all over the world, 5/ (e.g., Anthroposophical Society, 211 Madison Avenue, New York). Although some Anthroposophists tried to make a compromise between their doctrines and National Socialism, the Hitler regime prohibited the movement in Germany. The typical followers are benevolent and harmless sectarians who believe they have superior wisdom to the uninitiated.

Rudolf Steiner also claimed the Rosicrucians as forerunners of theosophy. His book, The Theosophy of the Rosicrucians, Something about the Rosicrucian Mysticism, appeared in 1911, when he still belonged to the Theosophical Society, later he wrote The Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz.

One of Steiner's disciples, Max Heindel, founded the Rosicrucian Fellowship at Mount Ecclesia, Oceanside, California, in 1913 (with many branches, e.g., Rosicrucian Anthroposophic League, Harlem Center, 226 West 138th Street, New York; 2350 Wester Street, San Francisco.)

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After Max Heindie's death he was succeeded by his wife. The adherents are mostly of German origin. During World War II the fellowship was an extreme advocate of pacifism and endeavored to secure exemption for its members from war service. The Salt Lake City chapter was reported to have been active in isolationist groups. 9/ They were suspected as a channel for German intelligence and propaganda, but these suspicions were not substantiated. 10/ Propaganda literature of the fellowship is available. 11/ After seven years probation members are admitted on examination to the Inner Circle or Esoteric Group, about which little is known.

Neither the Rosicrucians nor the Anthroposophists have any doctrinal affinity to Communism; their messianic hopes are of a different character. They believe in the spiritual character of the universe and reject even modern science as materialistic. The Communist evaluation, as expressed in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, views anthroposophy as an abstruse mixture of mysticism, German idealistic philosophy and fantastic superstition and as a symptom of bourgeois decadence.

However, the international extent of the organizations, their secret ties and confused thinking do not entirely exclude the possibility that individual units could be used for Communist purposes.

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